

## [Hal H. Norbovig]

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Hal H. Norbovig (white)

22 N. Lexington Ave.

Asheville, N. C.

Watchmaker

Douglas Carter, writer.

CRAFTSMAN BORN Original Names Changed Names

Hal H. Norbovig Halver Halverson C9 - [1/22/39?] - [?]

CRAFTSMAN BORN

"My parents were born in Molde, Norway, and came to America in 1867. They were on the boat 30 days, and their first child, my oldest brother, was born before they got to New York. My father was the oldest of nine boys. I was born in 1876, the sixth of 10 children." The speaker is Halver Halverson, and the sign on his shop reads "Expert Watchmaker." He is above medium height, weighs about 170, has white hair, brushed straight back, wears glasses, and is known to his friends as "Professor", but he cannot recall how he got the nickname. He prefers to be called "Hal", but no one outside his family uses that name.

His father settled in Winona, Minnesota, and there Mr. Halverson was born. Some of his brothers and sisters still live there, and Minnesota is "home" to him yet, although he has been away for 36 years or so. He has never been to Norway, nor out of the United States,

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except for short vacation 2 trips to Canada and Mexico. His most exciting trip, however, was a boat trip on the Mississippi in 1893. His father had built an 18-foot sailboat in his spare time, and during the summer they set sail for Iowa: Mr. Halverson, his father, and two of his brothers. Adverse weather was encountered almost immediately, and once they were caught in a whirlpool, but they recalled their destination, Muscatine, Iowa, and then visited the Chicago World's Fair. The father was thinking of removing to Muscatine, but he did not find the situation there favorable. Returning from Chicago, he sold the boat and they went back to Winona.

Mr. Halverson was destined to see more of Iowa, however. For four years there he operated one of the early motion-picture theaters. Admission was 5¢ and 10¢, and the program consisted of two reels, lasting about 30 minutes. Later he operated a chain of 10 wholesale-grocery stores. Neither the motion-picture industry nor the grocery business was able to retain his interest, though, and he returned to the first business he knew: jewelry. For 15 years he was a traveling auctioneer, earning about \$250 a week. Then his health failed, and he has never completely recovered. When he was able to work again, he started anew, resuming the craft he learned as a boy in Winona. He had visited this state as a jewelry auctioneer, and the climate seemed beneficial to his condition, so here he is: Halver Halverson, Expert Watchmaker.

For three years after coming here he was employed by one of the leading jewelers, but he tired of the long, regular hours in the repair shop, and decided to open a place of his own. The high-priced field was fully covered at that time, as it is now, and his capital was limited, so he opened a very small store in one of the minor business sections. The enterprise was not prosperous at first, but he was his own boss again, and he managed to keep going.

Subsequently he moved twice, each time to a better location, and now he has a watchmaker working for him. His present store is roomy, but not [expensive?]; attractive, but not elaborate; conveniently located, but not conspicuous. There are glass showcases

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along two sides of the front room, which is flush with the sidewalk, and fronted with plate-glass windows. Mr. Halverson has his own workbench just inside one of the windows, so that the curious may stand on the sidewalk and watch him at work. The assistant's bench is farther back, against the wall. Both are behind the showcases. The rear room has other workbenches and the heavier machinery. Mr. Halverson values his tools and equipment at about \$2,000. Many of the tools have been in his possession for more than 45 years, including the first small set given to him as a boy by his father. Those could not be bought at any price, though their actual monetary value is small.

There is no extensive trade in merchandise, most of the income of the business being derived from repairing and manufacturing. Any article of jewelry can be made to order in the shop, and any repair job will be undertaken. Besides new merchandise, Mr. Halverson deals in second-hand articles, mostly watches and clocks. He has some very interesting old, timepieces, which he would probably sell if pressed, but he has become attached to them, and rather likes to have them around. One of these is a clock made entirely of wood in Boston in 1723. The works are of apple wood, and the other parts, cherry and maple. It still keeps accurate time.

Cleaning a watch does not sound complicated to the average person, and it is really a simple operation for the expert who has the proper equipment, but persons who have complained about the prices charged by watchmakers for cleaning their timepieces should see Mr. Halverson clean one. There is an astonishing number of parts in the average watch, and some of them are no larger than the small end of a pin. All must be removed and given separate attention. Some require the use of special tools before it is possible to remove them.

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When the watch is reduced to its component parts, each part is carefully examined under a powerful magnifying glass. Worn or faulty parts must be replaced, but whether or not the parts are replaced, each must be washed in a special solution, after which it is dried,

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washed again in benzine, finally dried, and then restored to its proper place. When it has been reassembled, the watch must be carefully adjusted: one nut or screw too tight or too loose might cause faulty operation.

In former days, as a hobby, Mr. Halverson painted landscapes. He was not very good at portraiture, but he became adept at cutting silhouettes. He made them at first to amuse his children and their friends, and, becoming interested, he later perfected the art.

Each member of his family seems to have inherited manual talents and a certain artistic ability. His father had been a watchmaker in Norway, and was successful, by standards there, but he had heard exciting things about America, and emigrated. He was not only a watchmaker, he made violins, and played them. Aamold, the concert violinist visited him, tried out his violins, found one he liked, bought it, and used it for the rest of his career. Mr. Halverson had seven brothers and two sisters, but 6 of the brothers died in infancy or childhood. The others became watchmakers. Later, one of them took up photography, and another, optometry, professions which they still practice in Minnesota. When their father died, Mr. Halverson's oldest brother took over his jewelry business, combined it with his own, and conducted it successfully until his own death a few years ago.

As a boy, Mr. Halverson was taught watchmaking in his father's shop, as were his brothers. He worked for his father for some time, and also for his oldest brother, after the latter had opened a separate place. At another time, he and his youngest brother operated a jewelry store of their own. In 1902 he married a lady of English parentage, and they had three daughters. The oldest daughter is the only one of the family who has had a college education - She graduated at the university of Minnesota. This daughter married, and is living in New Jersey.

The other two daughters are artists, living in California and working for the Walt Disney Studios. Buff, the older, is an assistant supervisor, with 40 artists under her, and Helen,

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the younger, is in charge of a department that employs 16 artists. The former was given the name Elizabeth, but she has been "Buff" since her baby days, when she told people 7 that her name was "Liz-buff". Mr. Halverson is very proud of several original Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and similar drawings that were sent to him by his daughters. They are framed, and hang on the walls of his store. When he sees a Walt Disney production at a motion-picture theater, he never is sure which part of the picture, if any, is the handiwork of Helen or Buff, because scores of artists work on each film, but it interests him to speculate. He has not seen his daughters for nearly seven years.

He does not bother to vote, now, and has not even registered here, but he leans toward the Democratic Party. Such things as Congress, relief, national defense, and the European situation do not interest him at all, and he has no opinions to express. He was brought up in the Lutheran church, but belongs to no congregation now. For a time he attended Christian Scientist churches, but never belonged to one.

Mr Halverson lives alone, at a local hotel, and takes his meals at various cafes nearby. He likes to play poker, and sometimes spends the night playing. He never loses, or wins, very much. Often, after an all-night session, he finds that he is about even. He is also a patron of petty "rackets": baseball and football pools, butter and egg lotteries etc. He is always loser on these, but takes it philosophically. However his favorite diversion is to go to the "movies"- after all, "I might see one of Walt Disney's; and I like to keep up with the work Buff and Helen are doing."